

Nature-inspired living near Singapore's highest peak

Protecting parklands and forest reserves from rapid urbanisation is not only good for residents but, as a recent global study revealed, also helps biodiversity to thrive.

The findings were published on June 1 in the scientific journal *Science Advances* by researchers from the National University of Singapore, Princeton University in the United States and Durham University in Britain.

They found that as at 2021, more than 278 million ha of parks had been downgraded, downsized or degazetted.

In Singapore, the Government has built a network of nature parks over the years that act as buffers for its nature reserves against urbanisation, while relieving the stress of visitorship on the nature reserves by expanding recreational opportunities for people interested in nature-related activities.

These Nature Park Networks and other green pathways such as the Rail Corridor also act as ecological corridors that strengthen connectivity between areas rich in biodiversity, such as nature reserves and parks.

The site of The Reserve Residences is near public parklands that let residents imagine coming home to a forest reserve.

Here are the main nature draws.

HINDHEDE NATURE PARK

The Hindhede Quarry (right) – the main attraction at Hindhede Nature Park near Bukit Timah Hill – was named after Mr Jens Hindhede, a prominent Danish businessman and tea farmer in Singapore in the 1920s.

The park, which was opened in 2001 by NParks, was designed with short trails for families with young children.

It offers Instagram-worthy views of the quarry and a man-made lake.

In the 1900s, Hindhede Quarry and other quarries in the area were the main spots set aside to obtain granite for paving roads and for use in construction. The quarries were shut down after the 1980s.



RAIL CORRIDOR

The Rail Corridor (right) is a green ecological passage that allows the movement of wildlife between Singapore's major green spaces. It is also a recreational corridor for the public.

So far, 21km of the total 24km length has been completed and is open to the public. Similar to nature reserves and nature parks, the Rail Corridor is not lit at night, so nocturnal animals can move freely.

It will form one of the island's longest unbroken stretches of green – from Woodlands in the north to Tanjong Pagar in the south – when completed in 2025.

On Feb 10, the northern section of the corridor opened, providing uninterrupted trails and pathways from Kranji MRT station to Spooner Road for joggers and cyclists.



According to NParks, there are about 30 entry points to the corridor, such as from the Rail Mall in Upper Bukit Timah Road and through Mayfair Estate.

The railway line commenced operations in the 1930s. On June 30, 2011, after Malaysia returned the land occupied by the Keretapi Tanah Melayu railway to Singapore, the rail tracks were removed to make way for what is now a green space.

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BUKIT TIMAH NATURE RESERVE

The 163ha reserve (above) has one of Singapore's richest and most diverse ecological systems, as it is home to more than 1,000 plant species and over 500 animal species. It is one of the country's few areas of primary rainforest.

The highlight is Singapore's highest peak, Bukit Timah Hill, which stands at 163m.

Established in 1883, Bukit Timah Forest Reserve was one of the first forest reserves to be created in Singapore, as recommended by Mr Nathaniel Cantley, then superintendent of the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

In 1882, he was commissioned by the British government of the Straits Settlements to prepare a report on the forests of the settlements. In it, he recommended that several forest reserves be created on the island.

The forest on the hill has been a botanical collection ground for more than a century, and the first known specimens of many Malayan plants were found here. Some of the reserve's flora and fauna species include the Seraya (*Shorea curtisii*), Red Dhup (above; *Parishia insignis*, also known as the Kayu Pontianak tree), Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) and Malayan Colugo (*Galeopterus variegatus*).



BUKIT BATOK NATURE PARK

Redeveloped from an abandoned quarry in 1988, Bukit Batok Nature Park (left) has idyllic views from a cliff that is more than 10 storeys high and overlooks a man-made lake.

There are also meandering footpaths that run through the secondary forest. Joggers will appreciate the park's gently undulating terrain for a challenging workout.

Nature lovers on social media



have reported sightings of the violet cuckoo (left; *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*), which was previously endangered but is now considered a "vulnerable" species.

It can often be seen in forests, parks and gardens where it is known to lay eggs in other birds' nests to get them to raise its young.



RIFLE RANGE NATURE PARK

Launched in November 2022 by NParks, Rifle Range Nature Park (left) covers 66ha of land from Rifle Range Road to Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. It is the longest trail of the eight parks in the Central Nature Park Network, with more than 7km of trails and boardwalks. The network is a ring of nature parks around the Central Catchment and Bukit Timah Nature Reserves.

Rifle Range is also Singapore's first net-positive energy nature park, as the energy harvested from the solar panels in the park exceeds its annual consumption. It features rustic foot trails, a granite quarry and bridges over natural streams.